



Montana

Department of Labor and Industry

Commissioner's Office

Contact Casey Kyler-West, Communications Director

TELEPHONE: (406)444-1520

FAX: (406)444-1394

e-mail: ckylerwest@mt.gov

P.O. BOX 1728

HELENA, MT

59624-1728

Barbara Wagner, Economist
(406) 444-5474

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(HELENA) --- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 6.0%

(HELENA) --- Montana's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased to 6.0% in February. Despite the slight increase from 5.6% in January, Montana continues to be well below the national average of 8.1%.

"Although the employment situation in Montana continues to deteriorate in response to the national recession, I feel confident that once the various projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act come online, we'll be able to put many of these Montanans back to work," says Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly. "In fact, we are already helping the economy recover by issuing an additional \$25 increase in weekly unemployment benefits paid for through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and we look forward to providing additional stimulus funding for the Montana economy."

This week the Unemployment Insurance Division reported seeing a slight downward movement in claims filed. This is the first time since November 7, 2008 that the weekly average claims have fallen below 2,000. Some of this decrease is expected due to seasonal re-hiring trends, while other claimants have exhausted their unemployment benefits

Seasonally-adjusted private payroll employment decreased by 2,700 jobs from January to February. The total number of Montanans who are working, including agricultural and self-employed workers, decreased by 1,829 jobs on a seasonally adjusted basis.

The seasonally adjusted consumer price index (CPI-U) increased by 0.4% for February, led by an increase of 3.3% for energy prices. About two-thirds of the price increase in the CPI-U was due to an 8.3% increase in gasoline prices. Food prices decreased slightly by 0.1% for the month. The index for all items excluding food and energy, also referred to as core inflation, increased by 0.2% for February.

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**Unemployment figures are seasonally-adjusted. Seasonally-adjusted numbers remove the effects of events that follow a more or less regular month-to-month pattern each year. These adjustments make nonseasonal patterns easier to identify. The margin of error for the unemployment rate is plus or minus 0.8 percentage points at the*

90 percent confidence level. All questions relating to the calculation of unemployment rates should be directed to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau.

The March 2009 Labor Situation Report will be released on Friday, April 17, 2009.

******* INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET *******

Monthly labor force information for Montana counties are available at:

<http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/cgi/dataanalysis/?PAGEID=94&SUBID=205>

Monthly Montana industry employment information is available at:

<http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/cgi/dataanalysis/?PAGEID=94&SUBID=199>

Annual labor force data for Indian Reservations in Montana are available at:

www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/?PAGEID=67&SUBID=121